

Comments at the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board – November 14, 2017

Application for a Certificate of Exemption (COE) to Discontinue 60 Medical/Surgical Beds, 12 Intensive Care Unit Beds and 5 Operation Room Beds in the Woodstock Hospital (COE #E-036-17)

My name is Dr. Brian Sager and it is my distinct honor to serve as Mayor of the City of Woodstock. I speak today regarding Centegra Health System's Application for a *Certificate of Exemption* to Discontinue 60 Medical/Surgical Beds, 12 Intensive Care Unit Beds and 5 Operation Room Beds in the Woodstock Hospital (COE #E-036-17).

First, I wish to thank the Board for holding Public Hearings regarding this and associated applications in the City of Woodstock on October 2nd, with special thanks to the Honorable Chair Kathy Olson and Board Member Maryanne Murphy for their presence.

With respect for the Board's heavy agenda and inherent time limitations, I will refrain from repeating comments I made at those public hearings. Rather, I will focus on the very positive, collaborative, community partnership enjoyed between Centegra Health System and Woodstock for many years. I have the utmost respect and appreciation for the many contributions Centegra has made, not only to the provision of health care, but as corporate citizens, serving as sponsors and supporters of so many constructive efforts across our community. We say Woodstock is a community that identifies areas of need and then works together to make good things happen; and...Centegra has worked with us to make many good things happen for our residents and those of the larger region. We will not deny those significant contributions, but uphold them and emphatically state we are most grateful.

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Further, while today's social character seems to revel in finding and pointing blame, that is not my character. I acknowledge the leadership of Centegra Health System, like so many of us in highly visible public arenas, is charged with making very complex, very difficult decisions of tremendous impact on the lives of individuals, families, the community and the larger region. The onerous nature of that responsibility does not escape me. Rather, I will publicly state I believe they understand and acknowledge their burden and I choose to believe they have tried, in light of given circumstances and current trends, to make the best decisions they could and did not enter the decision-making process with intrinsic malice. I choose to believe they acted and will continue to act with the best of intentions.

It must also be noted our community is well-aware of the statutory requirements this Board has to approve the requested *Certificate of Exemption* when information required by the Board by rule is submitted. We also acknowledge the *Summary of Findings* which states, '*The applicants have provided all of the information required by the State Board*'.

We thank Centegra Health System for its presence in our community and its many contributions; I choose to believe Centegra's decision-makers acted with proper intent in the most difficult of circumstances; we accept that due process has been followed, including the opportunity for our community to express its concerns through public hearings... for which we are most grateful; and we know the prescribed outcome. None of that diminishes the underlying sense of betrayal, abandonment, outrage and anger felt among our residents, however, and that is the challenge Centegra now faces.

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The challenge this Board faces is how to respond to other health care providers that will inevitably forward an interest in filling the void created by the approval of this *Certificate of Exemption*. I will not be so impudent or churlish as to point to the mission of the Board. I will boldly request, however, that, when other health care providers express interest in providing quality, comprehensive, accessible and reliable hospital and emergency services, the Board will discover an equally compelling obligation to approve that *Certificate of Need*.

Thank you.